

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8343
INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELTN, ETRD, CO
SUBJ: HIGHWAYS: TURBAY ON PAN AMERICAN HIGHWAY, PROTECTIONISM
AND PREFERENCES

1. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE (AND PROBABLE NEXT PRESIDENT) JULIO CESAR TURBAY, IN AN ADDRESS TO THE COLOMBIAN AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ON MAY 31, STRONGLY COMMITTED HIMSELF TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PAN AMERICAN HIGHWAY. WHEN HE LEAVES OFFICE IN 1982, HE SAID, IT IS HIS "FIRM ASPIRATION TO BE ABLE TO TRAVEL BY LAND TO PANAMA." WHILE HE DID NOT MENTION FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE AS A PARTICULAR PROBLEM, HE STATED THAT HE WOULD "SPARE NO EFFORT" TO SEE THE HIGHWAY OPENED. COMMENT: PERHAPS TURBAY INTERPRETED THE AMBASSADOR'S INQUIRIES ABOUT THE HIGHWAY (BOGOTA 2546) AS STRONG U.S. INTEREST IN ITS CONSTRUCTION AND WAS TRYING TO APPEAR FORTHCOMING ABOUT IT. IN ANY EVENT, HE HAS NOW MADE A PUBLIC COMMITMENT TO COMPLETION OF THE HIGHWAY WITHOUT, PERHAPS, FULLY UNDERSTANDING SOME OF ITS ASSOCIATED PROBLEMS. END COMMENT.

2. TURNING TO THE THEME OF TRADE, TURBAY SUGGESTED THAT AS ONE OF THE FEW DEMOCRACIES, COLOMBIA SHOULD HAVE A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S. AND LATIN AMERICA IN
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GENERAL SHOULD ENJOY A LOME-LIKE SYSTEM OF PREFERENCES THAT WOULD PROVIDE MUCH GREATER STABILITY THEN THE PRESENT GSP. TURBAY SAID THAT WHILE HE UNDERSTOOD THE REASONS FOR U.S. PROTECTIONISM, AND KNEW THAT PRESIDENT CARTER WAS COMMITTED TO A FREER AND MORE OPEN WORLD TRADING SYSTEM, COLOMBIANS WERE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF U.S. PROTECTIONISM ON THEIR ECONOMY, GIVEN THE FACT THAT

COLOMBIA'S ABILITY TO GENERATE NEW EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC
GROWTH WAS HIGHLY DEPENDENT ON GROWTH OF MINOR EXPORTS.
DREXLER

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Message Attributes

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